W.R. Greg

Truth Versus Edification

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TRUTH

VERSUS

EDIFICATION.

BY

W. R. GREG.

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TRUTH *versus* EDIFICATION.

Convocation in 1863 came to a decision of some importance, as far as importance can be said to attach to any decision of that anomalous and self-surviving body. The Lower House suggested and strongly urged the appointment of a Committee 'to report on' Dr Colenso's book; and the Upper House, in a crowded assembly of five members presided over by the Primate, in an evil hour conceded the request. Three circumstances, however, gave a peculiar significance to this resolution. The Bishop of Oxford was opportunely absent, being opportunely ill. The resolution was adopted by a majority of *one*,—three Bishops voting in its favour, and two against it. And the three 'ayes' were the Bishops of Lincoln, St Asaph, and Llandaff, while the two 'noes' were the Bishops of London and St David's. These two eminent dissentients pointed out certain

objections to the course proposed, and certain difficulties in which its adoption might involve them. They intimated that good seldom arose out of authoritative condemnations of argumentative works; that such condemnations and prosecutions were generally urged by inconsiderate and unknowing juniors, or by grey-headed men as inconsiderate and unknowing as the young; and that to denounce a book which they did not propose to answer, and a man whom they might officially be called upon to judge, was scarcely wise, and certainly not decorous.

This ground, indeed, had been boldly and plainly taken by a member of the Lower House on a previous day. He pointed out the very obvious consideration that the only effectual means of counteracting the mischief said to be wrought or menaced by the book whose publication they all deplored, was to reply to it; to show where it was wrong, and to prove that it was wrong. And it is the more clear that this course is obligatory upon some one, because while it may be assumed, and is confidently believed by those who have been most startled and shocked, that many of the propositions in the inculpated volume are untenable and may easily be refuted, it is equally certain that some of them are true and cannot be gainsaid; and the religious world are anxiously desirous to be told by some competent and

accredited instructor *which* of the Bishop of Natal's statements are correct, and which are erroneous. It is obvious that a *condemnation* of the book, however severe, however unanimous, however high the authority from which it may proceed, will afford no satisfaction on this—the essential—point to sincere and pious inquirers.

We fully understand the reluctance of those prudent and learned members of the Episcopate who voted against the appointment of the committee in question, to undertake, or to allow any of their authorized brethren to undertake, the task of dealing with Dr Colenso's work. They know well—though the great body of the clergy who constitute the Lower House may probably be ignorant—that any honest, effectual, and competent reply must commence by concessions which would startle the generality of English churchmen almost as much as the obnoxious book itself, and might unsettle their faith far more; because, though they would be less extensive and would refer to points less vital, they would be as new to the masses, would come from a higher authority, and, once made, could not be recalled. This is the real difficulty that stands in the way of any attempt to meet Dr Colenso's biblical criticism on the part of our ecclesiastical dignitaries and 'accredited teachers.' It may well be that all that

is truly noxious and dangerous in the Bishop's book could be satisfactorily and conclusively refuted by an unfettered layman whom piety and learning should combine to qualify; but the very position in which he would place his battery would raise suspicions and accusations of treachery from the churches, whose battle he was going to fight, and the first shot he fired would strike even greater dismay into the hearts of his own camp than into the ranks of the enemy.

We can understand also the disinclination of fair and qualified divines, like Dr Tait and Dr Thirlwall, to anathematize a work which, mischievous and erroneous as they might deem it as a whole, yet contains some corrections of old errors and misconceptions such as they would themselves be glad to see generally accepted, and some wholesome views, usually denied or neglected, which they themselves have long entertained. We approve, therefore, both their prudence and their loyalty; and we regret that it should have been reserved for a layman, who has drunk too deep at the fountains of all literature and of some sciences not to know where truth lies, so to imitate one of the most ordinary and most indefensible proceedings of the ecclesiastical mind, as to denounce a book which he not only does not attempt to refute, but which he does not even pro-

fess to believe is, in its main propositions and substantial essence, capable of refutation.

A number of *Macmillan's Magazine* published at that time contained an article * from the pen of Mr Arnold strongly condemning, not the conclusions of Bishop Colenso's book, but the publication of that book. The article in question, like everything that proceeds from the same source, was eminently characteristic, able, polished, and interesting; but it maintained a thesis so questionable, and based upon fallacies so transparent and assumptions so inaccurate, that we are filled with surprise at so practised a disputant venturing to take up a position so unsafe.

The opinion of Mr Arnold—which he appears to hold as firmly as any Catholic divine, and which he certainly broaches as nakedly as any Pagan philosopher—is, that the distinction between *esoteric* and *exoteric* views and knowledge is as obligatory as that between the divine and the human, the sacred and the profane, and cannot be disregarded or broken down without mischief or without guilt; that truth is the privilege of the few, and edification the only claim and right of the many; that, in a word, sound doctrine is for the clergy, and safe doctrine for the laity. We are naturally a little startled at the

* *The Bishop and the Philosopher.* By MATTHEW ARNOLD.

naïve courage with which this very academic notion of the Oxford professor is propounded by one of her Majesty's inspectors of schools assisted and superintended by the State; but as we are desirous to avoid all abstract or disputable questions, and as there is a sense in which, and a limit up to which, the thesis in question does admit of justification, we shall not join issue with Mr Arnold upon this ground. We may at once concede as a general principle, that in all cases, mental as well as material, the soil must be prepared before the seed is sown, if we wish to reap a satisfactory and wholesome harvest; that 'strong meat is not for babes;' and that the young, the ignorant, and the uncultured masses, who seek only moral guidance and spiritual consolation and support, should be fed with what St Paul terms 'the sincere milk of the Word,' rather than with 'doubtful disputations.' But when Mr Arnold proceeds to apply his *esoteric* philosophy to the case before us, and to deduce special rules from his general theory, he comes upon propositions which are not only utterly inadmissible as practical directions, but quite incorrect as serious statements.

No book (on such a subject as biblical criticism or theology) ought to be written, says Mr Arnold, unless it is calculated either 'to inform the instructed or to edify the uninstructed;' unless it aims either

to elevate the moral condition of the masses, or to add to, and carry forward to a higher point than it has yet reached, our knowledge of theological science. Bishop Colenso's book does neither. It has therefore no *raison d'être*, and its publication is a culpable indiscretion. 'We knew all this before (says, in effect, the Oxford professor): it is no news to us that much of the Pentateuch is un-historical, its figures usually untrustworthy, and its facts often questionable, and sometimes obviously incorrect: you have told us nothing fresh, and even the old matter you have not told us particularly well; and, more than this, you had no business to tell it to the multitude at all. If you must write such a book, you ought to have written it in Latin; in which case it could have been read by few of the working clergy, and by scarcely any of the busy laity.'

Now, if Mr Arnold is content to use the terms of his general proposition in a *strict* sense, we should not be inclined to dispute it. Every religious work —indeed, every serious work—ought to be able to plead as the justification, both for its existence and its character, that it seeks either the enlightenment of the instructed few, or the edification of the ignorant many. But he does *not* use his terms, or at least he does not apply them, strictly; and therefore we demur to the doctrine, and we hold his applica-

tion of it to be slippery and unfair. We affirm that Bishop Colenso's book *is* calculated both to inform those whom Mr Arnold, we presume, would in courtesy consider as the instructed, and to edify those whom he would include among the uninstructed; and we are satisfied that the Professor, as soon as he looks at our assertion closely and in the concrete, will be the first to agree with us. We should think very ill of our argument if we could not carry with us in every step of it a mind so lucid, so straightforward, and so sincerely liberal as Mr Arnold's.

There are not less than fifteen thousand clergymen of the Church of England, and about as many more divines, or ministers of other sects—Baptists, Presbyterians, Wesleyans, Romanists, Unitarians, &c. — who are every Sunday employed in expounding the Scriptures and preaching Christianity to various congregations in Great Britain. There are, that is, thirty thousand accredited theological teachers, whose business it is to 'edify the ignorant masses,' and who labour diligently and honestly in their vocation. Now, we simply ask, do these preachers, as a rule, belong to Mr Arnold's class of 'instructed,' or to his other class of the 'uninstructed'? If to the instructed, then it is manifest that the Bishop's book is eminently calculated to 'inform

them,' and to carry forward *their* knowledge of biblical criticism and theological science. Mr Arnold knows, far better than we can tell him, how deplorably slight is the *professional* education of the Church clergy; and how still more superficial is that of the great majority of dissenting ministers. It is certainly not too much to say that out of the above-named thirty thousand religious teachers, whom by courtesy we must rank among the 'instructed,' there are not above five thousand to whom the Bishop's facts and arguments will not be almost or altogether new. The remaining twenty-five thousand, if they do not now learn for the first time that the doctrine of Plenary Inspiration has been impugned, have no idea that it has long since been abandoned by all the thoughtful and really learned even among orthodox and earnest Christians; that no one, however pious, who has studied theology as a science, or is at all acquainted with the result of the investigations of the ablest divines, now believes that the Pentateuch, as we have it, was written by Moses, or doubts that its narratives are often legendary, and its numbers almost invariably mythical. To all these men the facts and reasonings of the Bishop will come like a flash of dazzling and bewildering lightning. It will not only 'carry forward their knowledge of biblical criticism'—it will be nearly their first introduction

to that new department in their own field of thought. It will not only 'inform them further' on topics which ought to have been familiar to them from their ordination—it will be literally the alphabet of that information to most of them. These things, which are old and almost trite verities to 'us,' are to them the most astounding and disturbing novelties. Dr Colenso's book to all these men will be what Lessing and Eichorn, and De Wette and Ewald and Strauss, were successively to the theological world of Europe. It does not, indeed, greatly carry forward the science of biblical criticism, but it brings that science for the first time home to the vast majority of British ministers of the Gospel.

If, then, the mass of English clergymen, orthodox and schismatic, be included by Mr Arnold in his category of the instructed few, then there can be no doubt that the Bishop's book will 'inform and enlighten' them, and has therefore made good its title to existence. If, on the other hand, Mr Arnold, from the height of his academic culture, and looking to indisputable facts, should relegate them in his calm and dignified serenity to the crowded ranks of those uninstructed many, for whom 'edification' is all that is necessary and all that is accessible,—then in reference to that proposition also we have a word

or two to say. But the argument we are criticizing was obviously based upon the first and more polite division; and on that supposition only could it have any validity whatever. If, indeed, as Mr Arnold appears tacitly to have assumed or intended to imply, the theological teachers of the nation—all 'instructed' men—knew perfectly well, and had long known, that much of the Pentateuch was unhistorical, that none of it was verbally and textually inspired, that it contained many narratives which were legendary, and some legends that were of a very doubtful moral tendency,—that amid splendid truths and sublime revelations, and pure and noble precepts, and marvellous insight into God's character and dealings, it mingled much of a very different if not opposing nature;—and if, knowing all this, they carefully winnowed the wheat from the chaff, and —without disturbing the minds of their uncritical and undoubting hearers by hints of sceptical theology —taught them only what was edifying, made them believe only what was credible, insisted only on worthy and elevated views of God, and reiterated and enforced only that pure morality and that unfaltering trust as to the truth and value of which no question could arise,—then, indeed, we might have been ready to admit that critical propositions which all the wise knew need not be repeated, and that the

ignorant who knew them not would be no better nor happier for having them proclaimed and expounded. But Mr Arnold is well aware that the 'if' supposed is the very reverse of the truth; that the majority of the teachers who every Sunday get up into their pulpits to 'edify' the multitude below them, neither endeavour to keep the difficulties of the Old Testament in the background, nor are conscious of the existence of those difficulties; but, on the contrary, often appear with a kind of perverse instinct to delight in bringing them forward, and dwelling upon them till the thoughtful are unspeakably disgusted, and the thoughtless are hopelessly perplexed and led astray. Mr Arnold's assumption, therefore, of an instructed clergy who know already all the Bishop can tell them, falls to the ground as notoriously at variance with facts.

The plain truth is, that the assumption of an instructed clergy and an uninstructed laity is a purely imaginary one; and in the fact that this line of demarcation *is* imaginary lies the substantial justification of all works like Dr Colenso's. It is, indeed, only through the laity that we can instruct the clergy. It is only by appealing to the *populus* that the *clerus* can be made to open their eyes or to guard their lips. In this country there is a great analogy between the only effectual course of pro-

ceeding available to reformers in theological and in political matters. Every one who has tried has been compelled to admit, with bitterness and indignation, that if he desires to bring the Government to abandon a mistaken system or to adopt sounder views, it is not to members of the Government that he must address himself. Time so employed is usually thrown away. He must convince the public—not the ministers: and when the public is enlightened and persuaded and grows noisy, then the officials follow tardily, reluctantly, and grumblingly in its wake. Ecclesiastical tenacity in adhering to old ideas, established formulas, obsolete errors, and exploded routine, is at least a match for bureaucratic immovability and (to coin a word) unconvinceability. As long as listeners are uninstructed, preachers will continue to enunciate, with the same security as heretofore, the drawling platitudes, the innutritious ethics, the unbelievable legends, the startling narratives, the unedifying commentaries, the repellant dogmas, with which it is their inveterate custom to regale their audience,—and will call these things the saving truth of God. Does any one suppose—does Mr Arnold fancy—that if the mass of the people, the rational but unlearned laity, were once conversant with the untenable nature of the doctrine of Plenary Inspiration and the unhistoric character

of many of the Old Testament narratives, the pulpits of the land would *dare* to resound Sunday after Sunday, from our cradle to our grave, with the dreary, shallow, unprofitable, misleading verbiage, which our clergy now deem good enough for hearers who know no better? Does any one believe that, till the people *are* thus enlightened, there is any prospect of this discreditable and injurious state of things being amended? You must force the 'accredited teachers of religion' to teach truth and sense and edifying doctrine, by so augmenting the capacities and requirements of their flocks that they cannot, for fear of being put to open shame, do otherwise.

Looking at all these considerations—comparing with much sadness, and with no little anger, what the few really instructed clergy believe and know, with what the majority of the clergy habitually preach—we are driven to affirm that there is a sense, and a most essential sense, in which works like Bishop Colenso's are edifying to the general public—the mass of reading and thinking, though unlearned men. We are not going to eulogize the particular volume in question. Regarded as a philosophic treatise, and viewed in the light of the higher exegesis, it might seem weak and narrow if we did not receive it as part of an unfinished whole.

Nearly all the efficiency—of the first part at least—would be neutralized by a controversialist who should at once concede that the *figures* of the Old Testament—whether from original obscurity of notation, or from errors of copyists arising out of that obscurity—are obviously unreliable. But let us remember that this book is in the main specifically directed against the position of those divines who maintain the verbal inspiration, the entire accuracy, the unassailable textual authority of every part and of every statement in the Bible. This position is most crucially tested and most effectually and irrecoverably overthrown by precisely such minute and narrow arguments as Dr Colenso has adduced. His small weapons penetrate where heavier falchions would merely make a dint. The multiplication-table has a grasp which will hold thousands of minds that would slip easily away from any philosophic syllogism or dilemma, and on whose pachydermatous nature the sharpest shafts of rhetoric would be blunted or turned aside. Against detailed and positive dogmatism, detailed and microscopic criticism is the best antagonist that can be employed. And no one can deny that, while it leaves (thus far) all the religious value of the Bible untouched, as an assault upon the dogma in question—verbal and plenary inspiration

—the Bishop's book is irresistible and its success complete.

And this at once brings us to the proposition to which we have been leading up, and which warrants us in characterizing the 'Inquiry into the Pentateuch' as eminently edifying. Many of those doctrines of Christianity, as ordinarily preached, which most perplex and try the faith of sincere believers, and most effectually repel from the threshold of belief thoughtful, pure, and earnest minds of all classes, depend for their authority mainly or solely on special texts and passages, which are often at variance with the general tone and tenor of the book. These special texts and passages are considered conclusive, and all men have been required to fall prostrate before them, and submissively accept their teaching, merely on the strength of that dogma of verbal inspiration which Dr Colenso so effectually overthrows. It cannot be too strongly stated that nearly all the difficulties which have stood in the way of the cordial reception of the pure religion of Christ, whether by foreign heathens or by native sceptics, have been gratuitous, artificial, and the creation of Christian ministers and divines. Thousands upon thousands would have accepted the rich essentials of the New Testament readily and joyously, who could not accept the legends, the dogmas,

or the speculative propositions which were affirmed to form part and parcel of Christianity, to be inextricably bound up in its nature, and to be inferentially involved in its reception. It is not the noble poetry, and the sublime devotion, and the unfailing trust of Job, and David, and Isaiah; it is not the fascinating character, the solemn grandeur, the elevating, enriching, guiding, glorious career of the Saviour while on earth; it is not the satisfying, comforting, strengthening, convincing views of our relations to God our Father which he first taught and made us comprehend; it is not those grand and far-reaching hopes, nor those grave, sad warnings, nor those ineffable and inspiring consolations, which we may gather from every page of the New Testament and from many pages of the Old:—it is none of these things that have deterred the thoughtful and the good, or even the careless and the critical, from accepting Christianity on their knees with gratitude and with submission, as the greatest boon ever offered to struggling and aspiring man. All these things would have been attractive—not repellent; and these things are the essence of the faith which Jesus taught and for which he lived and died. But the angel that has stood with flaming sword at the gate, and has driven men away from the threshold of that Eden of Truth and Hope, in which

they might have found rest for their troubled souls, strength for their feeble knees, and a lamp for their dark and thorny path, has been this very doctrine of verbal inspiration and textual correctness, against which Dr Colenso has broken so keen a lance.

We need not go into long details; a few specified instances will do the work as effectually as a hundred. We need only remind our readers that it is *on the authority of this dogma, and on this alone,* that educated and rational men are required, as the very condition, as it were, of their admission into the Temple, to accept as true the six days of Creation with all their rude errors and their singular misconceptions; the Tree of Knowledge, the Apple and the Fall; *two* statements as to Noah's ark and the animals that entered it, utterly contradictory, and both incredible; the ingenious legend of the Tower of Babel; the literal version of the plagues of Egypt, and the crowded miracles of the Exodus, the Passage of the Red Sea, the Sojourn in the Desert, and the establishment in Canaan; the strange and more than strange stories about the Patriarchs; and, to crown the whole, the directly divine origin of the horrible Levitical instructions. No one, of course, would dream of accepting these as history, if not constrained to it by the dogma of verbal inspiration;

nor, were it not for this dogma, would any one feel them a serious obstacle to the reception of all that the Old Testament contains of noble, and elevating, and true, in its teachings of 'the ways of God to man.'

So much for narratives. In the matter of creed and doctrine, there are two or three Articles of Faith which have more than any other stood in the way of the cordial and grateful reception of Ecclesiastical Christianity by the most pure and honest minds—those whose instincts of justice were truest and strongest—those whose conceptions of the Deity were the most lofty and consistent. These are the doctrines of Vicarious Punishment, of Salvation by Belief, and of Eternal Damnation. Of these doctrines—as *now promulgated and maintained*—three things may in our judgment be confidently asserted—that they were undreamed of by Christ; that they can never be otherwise than revolting and inadmissible to all whose intuitive moral sense has not been warped by a regular course of ecclesiastical sophistry; and that no Christian or sensible divine would think of preaching them were they not inculcated, or supposed to be inculcated, by isolated texts of Scripture; and were it not held that every text of Scripture is authentic, authoritative, indisputably true, and in some sense or other, inspired and divine.

We are driven, therefore, to the conclusion that this proposition, or theory, or dogma—whichever we may please to call it—is mischievous and hostile to the pure religion of Jesus in two ways: it deters thoughtful and sincere minds from receiving it, and it corrupts and complicates and stains it to those who have received it, by mingling with it incongruous and deteriorating accretions. To destroy this dogma, therefore, to demonstrate its untenability, to shake its hold on both the teachers and the taught, is, we maintain, to 'edify' in a peculiar and a double sense, and is the most signal and the most needed service which a good and pious man can render to the sacred cause of Christianity and Truth.

Apparently Mr Arnold has been somewhat startled by the reception of his first Paper, and the impression it has produced upon the minds of the classes whom he thought he was addressing; for he has mingled with a cordial and well-merited eulogium of 'Stanley's Lectures on the Jewish Church,' which subsequently appeared in the same periodical, an elaborate explanation and justification of his former judgment. This attempted justification is, in our eyes, a singular aggravation of the offence, and contains more injustice and unfairness than we can easily comprehend in a writer so peculiarly lucid and a thinker ordinarily so exact. The tone, the assertions, and the

arguments resemble far more those of a baffled, bothered, and irritated clergyman, angry with a controversialist who had dazzled and bewildered him, than the calm treatment of a philosopher who is serene because he knows that he is clear and feels that he is strong. Mr Arnold affirms that Mr Burgon's proposition, that 'Every word, every syllable, every letter of the Bible is the direct utterance of the Most High,' is *a thousand times less false* than Dr Colenso's statement, that 'the writer of Exodus, while compiling his legend, was innocent of all conscious wrong or deception.' So at least we read his singular assertion. He commends Spinoza for saying that 'the Bible contains much that is mere history, and, like all history, sometimes true and sometimes false,'—because Spinoza uttered this *merely* as a speculative idea, and 'brought it into no juxtaposition' with the religious faith of Christendom. He justifies Galileo in declaring, in spite of Joshua, that it was the earth and not the sun that moved; but says that if Galileo had 'placed this thesis in juxtaposition with the Book of Joshua, so as to make that Book regarded as a tissue of fictions, then his "the earth moves," in spite of its absolute truth, would have become a falsehood.' Again, in order to condemn Dr Colenso by the contrast, he praises Dr Stanley for telling the reader that with regard

both to the numbers, and the chronology, and the topographical details of the Israelitish Journey, 'we are still in the condition of discoverers,' and that 'suspense as to such matters is the most fitting approach for the consideration of the presence of Him who has made darkness His secret place.' How could he lose sight of the fact that this 'exactness' as to all details which Dr Stanley condemns, *is the most marked characteristic of the Biblical writers,* and that precise feature of their narratives which Dr Colenso assails and exposes. Plainly enough, neither Mr Arnold nor Dr Stanley believe the details given by the sacred writers to be always 'exact:'—why should Dr Colenso be singled out for blame because he undertakes to show how 'inexact' they are?

Mr Arnold takes up one very singular position. The 'intellectual ideas' around which the religious life of any age collects, and to which it clings, are often, he says, inaccurate, and even unfounded; and from time to time are discovered and proved to be so. New views and new truths are established in reference to religious matters, and to 'make these new truths harmonize with the religious life'—*i. e.* with the religious feelings of mankind—is, he admits, a task which must sooner or later be performed, though 'one of the hardest tasks in the world.' But then he says it should be left to the

Zeit-Geist, or Spirit of the Time; or if ventured upon by any man, it should be by one of those great prophets who only appear on the stage once in many ages. Only an Isaiah or a Luther ought to venture on translating for the world the new intellectual truths and religious discoveries of a Spinoza or a Hegel. '*Insensibly*,' he says, these new ideas should percolate downwards and around, till the nation has become more or less penetrated with them, and 'the time comes for the State, the collective nation, to intervene,' and adopt and adapt them. But what does he mean by 'insensibly'? And how is this percolation and inoculation to be effected without human agency? 'Time,' Mr Arnold thinks, will do it. But what is Time save an abstraction, unless it means the sum of influence exerted on the general mind by some scores of writers like Dr Colenso? How could 'Time' operate if all Colensos are to be condemned to everlasting silence? To live for ever in the intellectual ideas of those who framed the Articles and the Prayer Book, is, Mr Arnold avows, impossible. The old popular notion of the Atonement 'is barbarous and false.' The new ideas, being the true ones, must somehow or another, he feels—'insensibly' if possible—be introduced into, and made to harmonize with, the religious life of the people. But it must not be done by proclaiming

them, by arguing for them, by demonstrating them, before the assembled intelligence of the nation. It must be done by some undescribed mental effluvia, some subtle intellectual emanation, homœopathic, and therefore at once harmless and penetrating. It must needs be (says the Professor, with a sigh of mingled candour and resignation) that enlightenment come; but woe to that man through whom it comes! And the woe is not *prophesied* for him as an imprudent man, but *denounced* against him as a dangerous and noxious one.

Mr Arnold, in the strength of his trained intelligence and from the height of his accumulated learning, has been enabled to sever in his own mind the questionable, inadmissible, and unworthy portions of the Scriptures from their cherished essence, their grand truths, their sublime conceptions, and their guiding light—to assimilate the one and discard and pass by the other. He can say, 'I will live by the teaching and the inspiration of Isaiah and Job, and David in his finer moods, and Christ and Paul; and I will not plague myself with the cruelties, and sacerdotal trivialities, and shocking orders, and astounding narratives of Leviticus and Numbers. They pass over me like the idle wind which I regard not.' But *who and what enables him thus to analyze the ore, to clasp the gold and to reject*

the dross? Does he not reflect that, till men like Colenso have cleared the way and done the work, and achieved for him the eclectic freedom in which he revels, all that he discards or ignores in the Bible may be forced down his throat as equally authoritative, equally essential, equally divine, with all that he accepts? Does he not remember that, as long as that doctrine of Plenary Inspiration, at which Colenso has struck such a staggering and mortal blow, remains erect, all his wise and just discrimination is, in the eyes of ordinary Christians, ordinary clergymen, ordinary Churches, mere daring heresy and sin? Can he not perceive that Colenso is labouring to win, *legally, publicly, and for all,* that acknowledged right of separating God's truth from man's assertion, which Mr Arnold, *per saltum,* by lawless assumption, in his secret soul, and in his locked closet, has done for himself alone?

An ordinary believer—pious, sincere, knowing not Colenso, and having not been 'insensibly' inoculated by the subtle emanations of the *Zeit-Geist,* but trained in the common doctrine of Biblical Inspiration—is often put to sore suffering and trial. A man in sacredotal robes, brought up at the feet of the most accredited Gamaliel, stamped as sterling by the image and superscription of the National Church, addresses him thus:—'You are bound to believe—

for it is all written in the Inspired Books and endorsed by the Church—not only that God created man; called Abraham; led the Israelites out of Egyptian bondage, and set them apart and trained them as a peculiar people; revealed His true character and relations through a succession of prophets; and finally completed the purification and redemption of man through Jesus Christ;—but also that he directed the construction of Noah's ark, and sent all living beasts therein; aided Jacob in a filthy fraud; sanctioned the basest treachery; commanded fearful cruelties and unmerited penalties; permitted the flogging of slaves to death, provided only they did not die upon the spot; showed His back but not His face to Moses; and dictated the veracious narrative of Balaam and his ass. You must accept the one set of statements as not only equally true, but equally valuable and instructive, with the other; for what are you, that you should dare to choose between one and another deed or word of the Most High, or place one on a higher level than another? You must receive *all* these things, on peril of damnation; for they are all written in the Word of God; everything written therein is inspired: and to reject or doubt "the true sayings of God" is damnation.'—An ordinary Christian, thus addressed, either succumbs or resists. If he succumbs, his reason is out-

raged and bewildered, and his moral sense is shocked and injured. If he resists, he is made miserable by doubts, misgivings, and tormenting fears.

The same man, in sacerdotal garments, comes to Mr Arnold and addresses him in the same words. But the Professor, serene and unassailable in his double armour of natural intelligence and perfect culture, waives him aside with a gesture of supreme ineffable disdain, saying, 'Pooh, pooh, man! don't talk that stuff to ME.'

Now, the work that Dr Colenso has bound himself to do—and which, if he completes his labours with success, he will have done—is to enable the poor man as well as the *savant* and the sage, the layman as well as the Professor, John Smith as well as Matthew Arnold—to say to impertinent teachers from the uninstructed Church, 'Pooh, pooh! I know how to distinguish the building from the rubbish. I know wherein religious truth consists and where religious life lies. Don't choke ME with your regulation loaf of fossil sawdust, and tell me *that* is the Bread of Life.'

The Bible contains, in various books and passages, two discrepant ideas of the nature and attributes of the Supreme Being, about as wide asunder as ever prevailed among organized and civilized nations. It is only by the establishment of the doctrine which it

is the object and the justification of the Bishop of Natal's book to demonstrate—*viz.* that though the Bible *contains* the Word of God, it *is not* the Word of God, but contains much beside this, and much that is irreconcilable with this—that we can acquire an indefeasible right of choosing between these two discrepant conceptions. If the Bible be the Word of God, and be in every portion of it true and inspired, then one of these two conceptions is just as correct and authoritative as the other, and we are not entitled to choose the lofty and to reject the derogatory one. One of these conceptions is about as low and inadmissible as a rude and violent people ever framed for themselves in their most uncultivated times. The other is about the noblest and purest that human imagination ever reached. There is the God who showed his 'back part' to Moses—and the 'God who is a Spirit, and must be worshipped in spirit and in truth.' There is the God who wrestled bodily with Jacob and who fed with Abraham in his tent—and the God whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain, much less a temple made with hands. There is the God who talked with Moses face to face as a man talketh to his friend—and the God 'whom no man hath seen or can see'—whom 'no man can see and live.' There is Jehovah, who was the national and selected God of the Hebrews

—and there is our Father in heaven, who dwelleth in light inaccessible and full of glory, who is the dwelling-place of all generations, the Father of the spirits of all flesh. There is the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob—and there is the God of Isaiah, of Paul, of Christ. There is the jealous, angry, and relentless God of the rudest Jewish fancy, appeased by sacrifices and whole burnt-offerings, repenting him of what He had done, of what He had threatened, of what He had promised, unjust according even to our poor human scales of equity and righteousness—and there is the God of better days and truer conceptions, to whom whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices were a weariness and an abomination, with whom is no variableness or shadow of turning, long-suffering and plenteous in mercy, loving all His creatures, and loving most especially those whom He is compelled to chasten, forgiving till seventy times seven, giving His only-begotten Son to die for the world that He would save;—the great I AM, who shall wipe away all tears from all eyes, and whom the pure in heart shall be privileged to see at last. But, if Dr Colenso's proposition is not to be established—if books like Dr Colenso's are not to be written to make that proposition good—it will continue to be in the power and the practice of every bishop, priest, and deacon to declare that the one

conception is as true, as grand, as ennobling as the other—since both came equally from God, and both are equally inspired.

We have spoken plainly, broadly, and, as many will say, shockingly, because only thus can we awaken men's minds to the incommensurable magnitude and moment of the point at issue—a point which Mr Arnold has so strangely and suicidally endeavoured to cover up. Suicidally, we say; for while he blames Dr Colenso for not separating the living gold from the concealing dross of the Pentateuch, discerning the former and clinging to it, and cherishing it as the *essence* of the whole, he will not see that the Bishop, more methodical, more humble, and more comprehensive than himself, is labouring to *demonstrate the denied and denounced right of doing this very thing*.

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